

Request for Decision United Townships of Head, Clara & Maria Council

Type of Decision									
Meeting Date	Tuesday, April 17, 2018				Report Date	Thursday, April 12, 2018			
Decision Required	X	Yes		No	Priority	X	High		Low
Direction	X	Information Only			Type of Meeting	X	Open		Closed
Report#17/04/18/1201 – Staffing Changes									

Subject:

Review of decision made in May 2014 and changed in April 2017. *Options for consideration to improve staffing to alleviate work load on current staff.*

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council authorize staff to reinstate the practise of closing the office on Thursdays of each week to ease workload on staff, increase hours for Admin Assistant – Rec and change position definition and job description to more accurately reflect duties being conducted.

RESOLUTION #1

WHEREAS Council approved having the municipal office closed Thursdays of each week in 2014 and staff stopped that practise in the spring of 2017;

AND WHEREAS during that period staff did not identify any ongoing public concern, complaint or inconvenience with this practise;

AND WHEREAS work demands due to increased workload and staff leave have increased significantly with a substantial amount of back log requiring attention;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the United Townships of Head, Clara & Maria does hereby agree to reinstate the office closure policy;

AND FURTHER THAT the Recreation Admin Assistant position be increased from one day a week to two;

AND FURTHER THAT a new position be created to more accurately reflect the duties and responsibilities of current employees as outlined in the attached job description, leaving the position of Receptionist vacant, and to set that position at Level 5 of the Salary Grid.

RESOLUTION #2

WHEREAS Council has in the past provided funding for summer student employment under provincial or federal grants;

AND WHEREAS for 2018, none of the grants provided for a position similar to the one we require;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the United Townships of Head, Clara & Maria does hereby authorize staff to hire for the months of July and August a summer student to assist with the lending hub, outside maintenance and work with the Road Super;

AND FURTHER THAT Council commit up to \$4,500 to hire a summer student for a four day work week for 2018.

BACKGROUND/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The above resolution provides solutions to alleviate current time demands, makes use of skills and knowledge of current employees, and provides for eventual succession planning for the Office Admin position and eventually the Treasurer and Clerk positions. It considers both short term and long term solutions to the current issue as well as succession planning focusing on cost effective methods.

Crystal's position has evolved over the past years to much more than receptionist/admin assistant with Crystal taking on some entire areas of responsibility including waste management, emergency management, social media and grant and funding opportunities. This increased responsibility deserves increased acknowledgement and compensation.

With Noella away, and staff taking on additional duties, we are getting further and further behind. In addition the time dedicated to the trail issue has caused significant backlog of work.

With the recreation person working one day per week, it is difficult to train properly or offer any type of consistency. We are suggesting that this position be increased to two days per week. This would increase the possibility of attracting a qualified individual who might stay in the position and be able to provide continuity when senior staff leave. A one day a week position is hard to fill, or to train.

Workplace needs met in implementing the above resolutions:

1. reduce load on current staff;
2. time freed to focus on other jobs which have a better return for the community such as additional grant funding, sharing tasks and services with other communities, or streamlining current operations;
3. reduce stress, resulting in improved performance, increased productivity, reduced illness;
4. provides for succession planning;
5. hiring from within, reduces costs of hiring and training and succession;
6. provides available staff to fill in vacation, illness etc.;

Continuous downloads from the province have resulted in staff being faced with an ever increasing workload while hours worked or staffing do not increase. Demands have continued so that staff are feeling overwhelmed with the amount of work required. As needs change/demands increase in the future, we will be in a better position to adapt.

The number of days of time for time and vacation owed is adding up as the work load is such that we are unable to take time. With Noella's leave, the continuing stakeholder meetings and trail issues, training and vacant council seats, this situation is not getting better.

RATIONALE

By-laws and policies require annual review. Time does not allow for this to occur. Over the past decades, policies and by-laws were created to resolve one-off situations, often with no reference to applicable legislation. Many still need review and updating; being unenforceable in their current form.

As an example, Elections policy is to be completed by April 30...little work has been done to update election forms or policies. Too much time has been spent on work out of the norm.

To put the demands on staff into perspective, we have all gotten to the point where we no longer take breaks, and eat lunch at our desks while completing some other task. The items on our to-do lists do not allow for "sitting" while we have so much to do.

It may be argued that many of these requirements are not appropriate for a municipality of our size however; it has been shown that we do need to comply with legislation to be prepared to defend decisions and actions should we ever be legally challenged in the future. Complaints made against staff and Council in years past were successfully defended due to our compliance with our policies and by-laws as well as adherence to accountability and transparency rules. We do need to be prepared as we never know when we will be challenged and by whom.

Further, the province has initiated various penalties up to and including threat of personal fines should compliance not occur. Annual funding in the form of the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (and its successor) as well as special funding in one-off grants may be withheld should compliance not occur. Non-compliance with some legislated responsibilities could result in personal jail time.

It is agreed that small municipalities such as ours can ill afford increased staffing simply to meet provincial demands however; we exist at the will of the province. Non-compliance might have serious consequences up to and including forced amalgamations, depending on the government of the day.

It is staff position that a public unified protest with similarly sized municipalities, however futile in appearance, is the best option for affecting any long term change and encourages advances in that direction.

Policy Impact:

1. Reinstates policy stopped in 2017 with the opening of the new office.
2. Increases the Admin Assistant- Rec position from 1 day to 2 per week; increasing the appeal of the job.
3. Changes current staffing position to more accurately reflect increased responsibilities and duties which have evolved over the years through downloading.

Financial Implications:

1. Costs of additional 7 hours at Office Admin Assistant wage. \$7,000 - \$7,700 per year.
2. Costs of increase in current position to level 5 as office manager would be approximately \$2,500 for this year.
3. \$6,750 is in the Succession Planning reserve fund to assist with costs of training which may be utilized when training the new hire.
4. Although not formalized, HCM has realized a significant surplus for 2018, mainly as a result of funds not required for Homecoming which will easily offset these increased costs.

Others Consulted/Resources:

Crystal Fischer, Admin Assistant – Acting Treasurer

Approved and Recommended by the Clerk

Melinda Reith,
Municipal Clerk

Melinda Reith

Additional resources:

THE REALITY OF THE TAX RATE

By Mike Larocque, Consultant/Trainer for AMCTO, CAO/Clerk and Treasurer – retired.

When people enter the field of governance at a Council level or a Board or a Committee they are under pressure and criticism of the constituents to keep the tax rate down. Sometimes the citizens blame the bureaucracy, touting them as overpaid and underworked. In reacting to this some Councillors may lose sight of the whole picture and total range of their responsibilities and seem to think that reducing and or not providing sufficient staff is a solution. They seem to think that the tax rate is their only responsibility.

Insufficiency and inadequacy of staff is never a practical solution because the public still want service and the Province still requires compliance. Also, Councillors themselves want compliance and implementation of their own rules and want to be protected from not meeting their responsibilities.

Council has a responsibility to provide service, to communicate and inform and to comply with the laws of the land.

There is a silent download for the need of staff.

Over the past five or six years, the Provincial Government has been strengthening how municipal government should work. Besides providing the ability for Municipalities to operate under natural persons powers over several spheres of jurisdiction they have implemented new policies and legislations. Some of these are:

- Required hiring policies and human resource management practices.
- Required harassment and work place policies and monitoring.
- Required Occupational Health and safety committees, practices and meetings.
- Road surveillance and monitoring. Minimum Maintenance Levels.
- Required purchasing policies and processes and the monitoring thereof.
- Required PSAB (Public Service Accounting Board Practices).
- Required social and cultural services
- Sustainable Infrastructure Sustainability programs and the monitoring thereof.
- Required Asset Management Program Models and a Finance Plan.
- Required Accessibility standards and facilities access.
- Required Emergency Management Programs, monitoring and exercises.
- Required project management and reporting models for subsidy drawdown (provincial funding).
- Compliance with monitoring for the Safe Small Drinking Waters Act.
- Meetings monitoring and compliance.
- Freedom of Information Act.
- Transparency, Accountability, Communications monitoring.

All of these download to strengthen and make local government more sophisticated bring with it a silent but obvious download for the need of staff.

A number of municipalities have recognized this responsibility and have hired staff for their Finance and Administrations department. Municipalities are hiring Integrity Auditors and Communications Officers as well. These are inevitable costs that will increase the tax rate.

On the other hand there are some Councillors and some candidates who think keeping the tax rate down is the only objective and are willing to trade off the necessary implementation of these activities. This seems unrealistic and in the long run will have repercussions on the ability to serve, to comply and maintain staff.

Besides having a responsibility to manage the tax rate, Council also has the responsibility to provide Service, and to adequately staff the municipality, its Boards and committees in their charge. Council's responsibility is to balance all of these things.

The tools for balancing all that has to be managed are:

- Right sized staffing - Sufficiency and competency
- Controlling out of line spiraling salary and benefit - Costs of certain sectors.
- Solid processes and structure and practices that allow the municipalities' responsibilities to be conducted in an effective and efficient manner.
- Structured "Needs Identification" and "Prioritization Processes".
- Knowledge, understanding by members of Council along with continual training and development of staff.
- A sincere, mature, and ongoing process for strengthening Council and staff relationships.
- To ensure an administration that understands and knows how to set up and implement these tools.